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LETTER DATED 25 SEPTEMBER 1991 FROM THE PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF HUNGARY TO THE UNITED NATIONS ADDRESSED TO THE PRESIDENT OF THE SECURITY COUNCIL

I have the honour to attach a statement from the Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Hungary, Dr. Géza Jeszenszky, on the situation in Yugoslavia, which is currently before the Security Council. I would be grateful if you would circulate this communication as a document of the Security Council.

(Signed) André ERDOS
Ambassador
Permanent Representative

Annex

Statement by the Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Hungary on the situation in Yugoslavia

It is for the first time that a Minister for Foreign Affairs of free and democratic Hungary addresses this body. I cannot but remember how much hope and trust we, Hungarians, laid in this Council during our revolution in 1956. Today again, many people in and around Yugoslavia turn in their exasperation towards you.

We gathered here today to discuss the situation regarding Yugoslavia, where recently the crisis has continued to deteriorate, armed confrontation has become more and more violent, engulfing vast areas in bloodshed. Hungary has no intention to take sides in the conflict of the Southern Slav peoples, but feels compelled to draw the attention of the international community to the worsening situation in a country which is our neighbour, with which we have our longest common border. The effects of the hostilities and the violence are already being felt by our own population, our borders are being crossed by tens of thousands of refugees, our airspace has been violated several times by foreign planes. Our public is witness to a cruel war in our neighbourhood where not only men in arms but also civilians are dying, where towns and villages are bombarded and occupied.

Hungary believes that the conflict in Yugoslavia is a grave threat not only to the peoples living in that land, but also to the immediate vicinity, to the tormented democracies of the region, to all of Europe and the world. Our own historical experience suggests that the further escalation of the conflict there, its spreading to new areas, its spillover effects in terms of border violations, refugee influx and the accompanying instability and worsening bilateral relations with neighbouring States, represent a source of tension that must not be ignored in this volatile region and should be viewed as a threat to international peace and security.

Hungary, as all other Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe (CSCE) States, has been watching with hope and anticipation the endeavours undertaken with their support by the European Community. We believe the time has come for the international community to make its voice heard and to encourage and join the efforts to stop the hostilities and to halt the spread of this conflict. In view of the gravity and urgency of the situation, the United Nations cannot but undermine its own credibility if it stays on the sidelines, remains passive and shows a lack of necessary resolve to undertake coordinated efforts to help reinvigorate the ongoing peace process. In our fast-changing world we should take advantage of the moral and political authority of a rejuvenated world organization, which has recently demonstrated its capacity for efficient and resolute action. There is very little time to lose, since the absence of meaningful and practical steps would weaken international legality and would sow the seeds of future discords and antagonisms.

We believe that it is indispensable to bring about a peaceful political solution of the conflict in that country, in accordance with the Charter of the United Nations, the Helsinki Final Act and the Paris Charter. Every day that passes by with inaction makes such a solution more and more distant and difficult to reach.

When this conflict erupted, Hungary was of the opinion that the ideal solution for Yugoslavia would be a confederation of sovereign States. Until a few months ago, that was probably a realistic way of rearranging the relations between the components of that multinational federation. Unfortunately, the conditions for that have dwindled in the recent period. In our view, the international community and those who take an active part in the peace process should draw the appropriate conclusions from the situation that was created as a result of the violence and the bloodshed in Yugoslavia. An internationally acceptable political settlement should be reflective of the principle of self-determination by the peoples living in Yugoslavia, and of respect for human rights, including the rights of national minorities. It would be a historic mistake to launch the process of settlement without allowing not only the nations, but also the national minorities living in Yugoslavia, including half a million Hungarians, to express their views and to participate in that process.

At a time when Europe and the whole world is moving towards more tolerance and the spirit of cooperation is gradually gaining the upper hand within our countries and on the international scene, isn't it anachronistic, given the ethnic mosaic in Yugoslavia, and totally inadmissible, to spread the proposition advocating the creation of nation-States incorporating all people belonging to the same nationality and - in order to achieve this aim - to use force and violence to assault borders and to conduct an undisguised conquest of territories? If this logic were to prevail in international relations, the Central and Eastern European region would soon become the apocalyptic scene of national strife. We strongly believe that this would serve no one's interests. The solution lies not with the usurpation of lands and the arbitrary recarving of the present territorial configurations, but with the full and bona fide respect of human rights and, in this context, especially, of minority rights for each and every ethnic community, wherever they may be. I say that as the representative of a country whose historic territory was reduced to a third in 1920, and whose 3.5 million fellow Hungarians are now minorities in the countries around us. We most resolutely condemn any efforts or attempts at the forcible change of borders, external or internal alike.

There is a rightful expectation on behalf of international public opinion that our world organization should not only remain seized of, but also play an active part in the political settlement of all destabilizing crises in the world by organizing joint actions aimed at the prevention, containment and solution of crisis situations. In conformity with the Charter of the United Nations, the Security Council should encourage regional arrangements to deal with matters relating to the maintenance of international peace and security and should, therefore, give its full backing to the pursuit of efforts by the European Community, with the support of the CSCE States, and to its quest for additional ways and means, to facilitate the attainment of peace and security

all over Yugoslavia. One such avenue to peace might be the presence of foreign observers or even peace-keeping forces in areas yet untouched by the internal convulsions in Yugoslavia. The present fragile truce could offer us an appropriate opportunity to redouble our efforts to get the peace process moving.

The Republic of Hungary wishes to continue in the future its balanced and careful policies vis-à-vis Yugoslavia under the extremely delicate conditions existing along its southern border. We will do our utmost to avert our involvement in the conflict, while protecting the sovereignty of the country. Hungary was the first to heed the appeal of the European Community to suspend all arms deliveries to Yugoslavia. In fact, in October 1990 we banned the export of arms into Yugoslavia. We welcome any international participation in ensuring that our country stays out of the conflict and has its peaceful and constructive intentions recognized. Our invitation to have the observers of the European Community who are deployed in Yugoslavia also to monitor the Hungarian side of the border area is an unequivocal manifestation of that desire.

We are aware that no one, no arrangements, institutions or organizations can substitute for the will of the belligerents themselves. The peoples of Yugoslavia are the only ones to decide upon the future structure of that country. But in our world of interdependence and cooperation, we owe it to ourselves to extend our helping hand to those people to create conditions that would facilitate the attainment of a peaceful solution, in accordance with their democratically expressed opinion.